

# **Reward System for Tennessee Schools and Districts**

## **January 2004**

### **Overview**

The *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001* requires that States establish accountability systems which include both sanctions and rewards. In Tennessee's approved accountability workbook, the State proposed establishing a reward system as required by NCLB. This reward system recognizes two groups of schools and districts: those that have exceeded their AYP for two or more years and those that significantly close the achievement gap between their subgroup student populations. In addition, by establishing this reward system, Tennessee meets the requirements of T.C.A. § 49-3-360, which requires the state to establish and implement an incentive system for schools and districts.

The purposes of the reward system will be:

1. To recognize and reward schools and districts that are successful in exceeding adequate yearly progress as defined in the State's Accountability Workbook;
2. To identify schools and districts that can share their strategies for success; and,
3. To establish and implement a reward system that meets the requirements in NCLB and the Education Improvement Act.

### **Process of Establishing a Reward System**

To establish this reward system, the Department assembled a task force of key stakeholders to provide input to the Department. The task force met on December 16, 2003. Task Force members that were not able to attend the meeting were provided with an opportunity for input through a telephone conference call on December 19, 2003.

A draft policy was subsequently developed by the Department and shared with task force members for their consideration before being presented to the State Board of Education at its January 30, 2004 meeting for first reading. The draft policy will be disseminated to the public and presented to the Committee of Practitioners for comment. A final policy will be presented to the State Board for final approval during its Spring 2004 meeting. The reward system will be implemented by school year 2004-2005.

### **Summary of Recommendations from Reward Task Force**

The task force submitted the following recommendations to the Department for developing a reward system.

- The State should establish a reward system with at least two categories of rewards for schools and districts.
  - *Schools and Districts with Outstanding Performance* - The State should recognize those schools and districts that have shown success in exceeding

the State's annual measurable objectives in both reading and math for two consecutive years and have met both the State Board's performance goal for value-added and for graduation or attendance rate.

- *Schools and Districts with Success in Closing the Achievement Gap* – The State should recognize those schools and districts that have shown the greatest gains in closing the achievement gaps between their subgroup populations by increasing the percent of students in those subgroups that are proficient or above in math and/or reading/language arts.
- The State should establish a reward system with only two categories of recognition and no distinction made for the degree of accomplishment.
- The State should establish a formal recognition system which would include State Board approval of recognized schools and districts and a standard recognition process including the development of a specialized logo that would be used on the recognized schools and districts' letterhead, banners, and certificates.
- The State should develop and fund a financial incentive system for recognized schools and districts. This financial incentive system could be funded from two sources: state legislative appropriation or solicitation of contributions from public individuals and entities.
- If a financial system of rewards is established, the State should decide whether the funds provided to a school or district can only be used to improve instructional programs or may also be used as monetary rewards to individual staff members to use according to their discretion.

### **Proposed Reward System**

Tennessee will recognize both schools and districts as Tennessee Distinguished Schools and Tennessee Distinguished Districts. There will be two categories of recognition with the following criteria.

#### **Tennessee Distinguished Schools and Districts**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
Schools and Districts Recognized for Outstanding Performance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Achieved adequate yearly progress through meeting the annual measurable objectives in math, reading/language arts, and the additional indicator (attendance or graduation rate) for the last two consecutive years</li> <li>2. Achieved the State Board of Education's performance standard for value-added for the current year</li> <li>3. Placed in the top 10% of schools or districts for the percent of students scoring as proficient or above in both reading/language arts and math for the last two consecutive years</li> </ol>

<p>Schools and Districts Recognized for Demonstrating the Greatest Gains in Closing the Achievement Gaps between Subgroups</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Achieved adequate yearly progress in math, reading/language arts, and the additional indicator (attendance or graduation rate) for the last two consecutive years</li> <li>2. Achieved the State Board of Education's performance standard for value-added for the current year</li> <li>3. Placed in the top 10% of schools or districts based on the last two consecutive years of data for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the percent of students scoring as proficient or above in both reading/language arts and math from subgroups that statewide have not met annual measurable objectives in math and reading/language arts (Hispanic, Black, Students with Disabilities, Limited English proficient, or Economically Disadvantaged)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Or</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction of the percent of students in the aforementioned subgroups scoring below proficient in reading/language arts and math.</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Demonstrated that the percent of students tested as proficient or above in the all student category remained stable or improved.</li> </ol>
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Schools and districts meeting criteria in either category will be recognized either as Tennessee Distinguished Schools or Tennessee Distinguished Districts and will be taken to the State Board of Education for approval. Their status will be indicated on the Department's Report Card.

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